

Discourse Strategies:

1. How to politely interrupt:

- Would you allow me to add/say something?
- Do you mind if I interrupt?
- Pardon me, I'd just like to say something here..
- Excuse me, may I say something?
- Can I ask something?
- Can I jump in here?
- Sorry, can I just say something here?
- Pardon my interruption, but I think it's important to mention.....

2. How to ask for clarifications:

- I'm sorry. Could you repeat that please?
- I'm sorry I didn't hear you. Could you please say that again slowly?
- You said.... ?
- Did you say X or Y?
- Pardon?
- Excuse me?
- What was that?
- Say that again please?
- I'm sorry; I don't understand what _____ means.

3. How to stop people interrupting

- **Don't pause**

When you pause, even to take breath, you are giving other people the opportunity to interrupt. They may be just jumping in or may read it as an invitation to comment -- the result, however, is the same.

Regulate your breathing. When you are talking for a long stretch before taking a big breath, the breath takes longer.

- **Don't send signals**

When you are talking, you may be sending non-verbal signals that invite the other person to interrupt. Beyond pauses, these include:

- Raising eyebrows
- Relaxed body language
- Your speech getting slower
- Your speech getting quieter

- **Ignore signals**

When they send signals that they want to interrupt, simply ignore them. Carry on regardless, perhaps even doing such as increasing your speed or volume to signal back that you are not ready to be interrupted.

- **Don't look**

If you are looking at them, then when they send interruption signals then you cannot claim not to have seen them. You can:

- Look up, as if you are envisioning the things you are talking about.
- Look at your hands as you carve your ideas out of the air.
- Close your eyes as you imagine internal pictures of what you say.

- **Speed up**

A simple method of preventing interrupt is to talk quickly. When there are no gaps in what you say, then there is no chance of them interrupting.

In particular, when they try to interrupt, speed up your rate of speaking. This signals that you are not ready to finish yet.

Beware with this of becoming incoherent. Someone who talks too quickly may not be heard.

- **Get louder**

Another way of powering through an interruption is to increase the volume of your speech, getting louder as the other person tries to interrupt. Talking loudly all the time also acts as dissuasion.

As with several other methods, this may be combined to make a more powerful interrupt.

- **Use the power stare**

The *power stare* may be used to prevent interrupt. This involves looking intently at people for longer than the normal glance. Rather than look up or away as you speak, look directly into the eyes of people, scanning around each person whilst pausing at each one.

- **Can I finish?**

A simple and very powerful method of hanging onto the talking stick is to ask the other person if you can finish what you are saying.

...and when we reach -- can I finish -- the end of the year...

-- Sorry, Mike, I won't be long --

-- Jen, you've made your point, now it's my turn --

-- I'm sorry. I do want to hear your viewpoint. Is it ok if I finish the explanation first? -- Thanks --

4. Asking for confirmation

- Use tag questions: “It was a great idea, wasn’t it?”
- Add “right” at the end of a claim: “It was a great idea, right?”
- Nod while addressing the claim to another person.

5. Agreeing or disagreeing:

Disagree:

“I am sorry but I cannot completely agree with this...”

“It sounds great, but...”

“I don’t believe so, I think that...”

“I think, I have to disagree here...”

Agree:

“I also think so...”

“I am with you on this one...”

“Absolutely!”

“That is exactly what I was thinking.”

“It sounds like a great idea!”

6. Offer an example:

“For instance....”

“For example...”

“To illustrate my point let’s look at the following situation...”

“It is like....”

“A great example of this idea is...”